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## Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba



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# Trump moves to fire several national security officials deemed insufficiently loyal, AP sources say

By **MATTHEW LEE, AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER**  
**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Donald Trump has moved to fire several White House National Security Council officials after he was urged by far-right activist Laura Loomer to purge staffers she deemed insufficiently loyal to his "Make America Great Again" agenda, several people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

Loomer presented her research to Trump in an Oval Office meeting on Wednesday, making her case for the firings, the people said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive personnel matters. Vice President JD Vance, chief of staff Susie Wiles, national security adviser Mike Waltz and Sergio Gor, the director of the Presidential Personnel Office, took part in the meeting, the people said. NSC spokesperson Brian Hughes declined to comment on the meeting or the firings, insisting that the White House does not discuss personnel matters. The Presidential Personnel



**President Donald Trump speaks during an event to announce new tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House, Wednesday, April 2, 2025, in Washington.**

Office has moved to dismiss at least three senior NSC officials and multiple lower-ranking aides. Loomer, who has promoted 9/11 conspiracy theories, was a frequent presence on the campaign trail during Trump's 2024 successful White House run. More recently, she's been speaking out on social media about some members of Trump's

national security team that she insists can't be trusted. "It was an honor to meet with President Trump and present him with my research findings," Loomer said in a posting on X. "I will continue working hard to support his agenda, and I will continue reiterating the importance of, and the necessity of STRONG VETTING, for the sake of protecting

the President of the United States of America, and our national security." Trump has a long history of elevating and associating with people who trade in falsehoods and conspiracy theories, and he regularly amplifies posts on his social media site shared by those like Loomer, who promote QAnon, an apocalyptic and convoluted conspira-

cy theory centered on the belief that Trump is fighting the "deep state."

The move by Trump to push out staff comes at a moment when Waltz is fighting back calls for his ouster after using the publicly available encrypted Signal app to discuss planning for the sensitive March 15 military operation targeting Houthi militants in Yemen. Trump has said he stands by Waltz. A journalist, The Atlantic magazine's Jeffrey Goldberg, was mistakenly added to the chain and revealed that Trump's team used it to discuss precise timing of the operation, aircraft used to carry out the strikes and more.

Waltz has taken responsibility for building the text chain but has said he does not know how Goldberg ended up being included. Loomer, in the leadup to Wednesday's meeting with Trump, had complained to sympathetic administration officials that she had been excluded from the NSC vetting process as Waltz built up his staff, according to one person familiar with the matter. □

**Associated Press**

## Pence will receive the Profile in Courage Award from the JFK library for his actions on Jan. 6

By **JONATHAN J. COOPER**  
**Associated Press**

Former Vice President Mike Pence will receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for his refusal to go along with President Donald Trump's efforts to remain in office after losing the 2020 election, Kennedy's family announced Thursday.

The award recognizes Pence "for putting his life and career on the line to ensure the constitutional transfer of presidential power on Jan. 6, 2021," the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum said.

Trump pressured Pence to reject election results from swing states where the Republican president falsely

claimed the vote was marred by fraud. Pence refused, saying he lacked such authority.

When a mob of Trump sup-

porters stormed the Capitol, some chanted that they wanted to "hang Mike Pence." Pence was whisked away by Secret



**Vice President Mike Pence hands the electoral certificate from the state of Arizona to Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., as he presides over a joint session of Congress as it convenes to count the Electoral College votes cast in November's election, at the Capitol in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

Service agents, narrowly avoiding a confrontation with the rioters.

"Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify," Trump wrote on Twitter, as rioters moved through the Capitol and Pence was in hiding with his family, aides and security detail inside the building.

Pence rejected the Secret Service's advice that he leave the Capitol, staying to continue the ceremonial election certification

of Democrat Joe Biden's presidential election victory once rioters were cleared.

Two years ago, Pence said Trump's "reckless words endangered my family." The Profile in Courage Award, named for a book Kennedy published in 1957, before he became president, honors public officials who take principled stands despite the potential political or personal consequences.

"His decision is an example of President Kennedy's belief that an act of political courage can change the course of history," Caroline Kennedy and Jack Schlossberg, JFK's daughter and grandson, said in a statement. □



# Pentagon watchdog to review Hegseth's use of Signal app to convey plans for Houthi strike

By TARA COPP  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Pentagon's acting inspector general announced Thursday that he would review Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of the Signal messaging app to convey plans for a military strike against Houthi militants in Yemen.

The review will also look at other defense officials' use of the publicly available encrypted app, which is not able to handle classified material and is not part of the Defense Department's secure communications network.

Hegseth's use of the app came to light when a journalist, Jeffrey Goldberg of The Atlantic, was inadvertently added to a Signal text chain by national security adviser Mike Waltz. The chain included Hegseth, Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and others, brought together to discuss March 15 military operations against the Iran-backed Houthis. "The objective of this evaluation is to determine the extent to which the Secretary of Defense and other DoD personnel complied with DoD policies and pro-



U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth attends a joint news conference with Japan's Defense Minister Gen Nakatani at the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo Sunday, March 30, 2025.

Associated Press

cedures for the use of a commercial messaging application for official business," the acting inspector general, Steven Stebbins, said in a notification letter to Hegseth.

The letter also said his office "will review compliance with classification and records retention requirements."

Hegseth and other members of the Trump administration are required by law to archive their official

conversations, and it is not clear if copies of the discussions were forwarded to an official email so they could be permanently captured for federal records keeping.

The Pentagon referred all questions to the inspector general's office, citing the ongoing investigation.

In the chain, Hegseth provided the exact timings of warplane launches and when bombs would drop before the men and wom-

en carrying out those attacks on behalf of the United States were airborne.

The review was launched at the request of Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, the committee's top Democrat.

In congressional hearings, Democratic lawmakers have expressed concern about the use of Signal and pressed military officers on

whether they would find it appropriate to use the commercial app to discuss military operations.

Both current and former military officials have said the level of detail Hegseth shared on Signal most likely would have been classified. The Trump administration has insisted no classified information was shared.

Waltz is fighting back against calls for his ouster and, so far, President Donald Trump has said he stands by his national security adviser.

On Thursday, Trump fired several members of Waltz's staff after far-right activist Laura Loomer urged the president to purge staffers she deemed insufficiently loyal to his "Make America Great Again" agenda, several people familiar with the matter said.

In his Senate confirmation hearing Tuesday, Trump's nominee for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Caine, would not say whether the officials should have used a more secure communications system to discuss the attack plans.

"What I will say is we should always preserve the element of surprise," Caine told senators. □

## Judge says U.S. government may have 'acted in bad faith' as he weighs contempt over deportation order



U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, chief judge of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, stands for a portrait at E. Barrett Prettyman Federal Courthouse in Washington, March 16, 2023.

Associated Press

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — A federal judge said Thursday that the Trump administration may have "acted in bad faith" by trying to rush Venezuelan migrants out of the country before a court could block their deportations to El Salvador.

U.S. District Judge James "Jeb" Boasberg in Washington pressed a Justice Department lawyer to explain the government's actions in a high-stakes court hearing to determine whether the administration ignored his orders to turn around planes that were carrying deportees to El Salvador.

The judge said he could issue a ruling as soon as next week on whether there are grounds to find anyone in contempt of court for defying the court order.

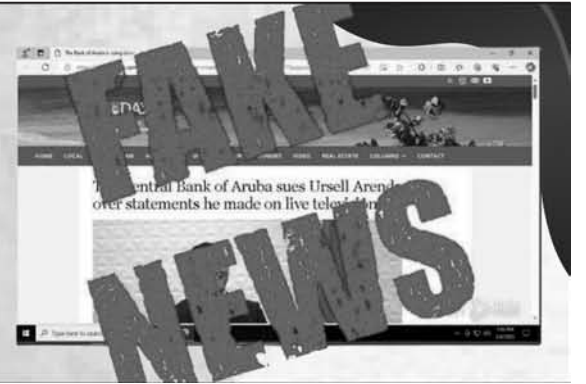
The case has become a flashpoint in a battle between the judiciary and the Trump administration amid mounting White House frustrations over court orders blocking key parts of the president's sweeping agenda. Trump has called for the judge's impeachment, while the Justice Department has argued the judge is overstepping his authority. Boasberg ordered the administration last month not to deport anyone in its custody under the Alien Enemies Act, a 1798 wartime law Trump invoked over what he claimed was an invasion by the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua. The judge also ordered that any planes with Venezuelan immigrants that were already in the air be returned to the United States. That did not happen. □



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## Trump's changes to the federal government aren't yet a clear political winner or loser: AP-NORC poll

By **AMELIA THOMSON-DE-VEAUX** and **JONATHAN J. COOPER**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Donald Trump's dramatic changes to the federal government haven't emerged as an obvious political winner or loser, according to a new poll that indicates some Americans may be giving him the benefit of the doubt for now on his Department of Government Efficiency.

The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll found that about 4 in 10 U.S. adults "somewhat" or "strongly" approve of Trump's handling of Social Security and a similar share approve of the way he's managing the federal government.

Those numbers are almost identical to Trump's overall presidential approval, suggesting that his Republican administration's moves to fire thousands of federal workers, close Social Security Administration field offices, effectively shutter entire agencies and cancel thousands of government contracts haven't yet created a significant independent backlash or spurred independent support.

Views of Trump and his adviser Elon Musk are still largely intertwined, despite Democrats' recent focus on Musk. The two men suffered a defeat on Tuesday when the conservative candidate they had endorsed for the Wisconsin Supreme Court was defeated. Musk and the groups he backed spent more than \$21 million in the race, the first major test of how voters feel about Musk's political impact.

The poll, which was con-



**Elon Musk arrives on Air Force One at Philadelphia International Airport, March 22, 2025, in Philadelphia.**

**Associated Press**

ducted before Tuesday's election, found that both Trump and Musk are viewed more negatively than positively and are largely rated similarly by Americans overall. Very few Americans have a positive view of one man and a negative view of the other.

Trump's actions on DOGE largely mirror his overall approval. Immigration emerged in the poll as a relative strength for Trump, while trade relations with other countries appeared to be a relative weakness. Unlike those issues, U.S. adults' views on Trump's handling of Social Security and management of the federal government are indistinguishable from his overall approval rating. This suggests that Americans may have a less developed opinion of Trump's actions in this area, or they may be waiting to weigh the impact.

There are hints in the poll

that Trump's pledge to cut government spending may be resonating.

Closer to half of U.S. adults approve of Trump's approach to government spending, which is slightly higher than his overall approval rating.

"I love DOGE," said Adam Marefka, a 42-year-old facilities maintenance specialist from Birmingham, Alabama, and a Trump supporter. "They're cutting wasteful spending. We need a smaller government, and there's only one way to do that."

Others see recklessness. Or, as Paul Vaitkus, of St. Petersburg, Florida, put it: "Total craziness."

"They're not going to just trim where it needs to trim," said Vaitkus, a 66-year-old retired cardiologist. "They're going to do huge damage to agencies, and it's going to erode the ability of those agencies to provide services to American

taxpayers."

Trump's handling of Social Security is more popular with adults age 60 or older than with younger adults. Despite that, older adults who tend to be more conservative overall but would also be affected by cuts or changes to Social Security are no more likely to approve of how Trump is handling his job generally.

Even if there's no clear backlash now, slashing popular programs like Social Security could still quickly take Trump and Musk into perilous territory. An AP-NORC poll conducted in January found that while Republicans and Democrats were divided on whether the U.S. government is spending "too much" or "too little" on the military, assistance to the poor and education, solid majorities of both said that "too little" was being spent on Social Security.

"All I want from this coun-

try is the government to help the seniors and the veterans. Not to take care of them. Help them," said George Collins, 80, a retired bagel maker living in Fort Mohave, Arizona. "It's hard when you're living on Social Security."

Collins, a Trump supporter, said the president's second term is going much better than his first, and he wishes Trump's critics and the courts would get out of his way.

"I wish people would just give him the time," Collins said. "Let him try to fix it at least."

Few Americans dislike Musk and support Trump

Despite Democrats' attacks on Musk, the opinion of the influential billionaire remains largely indistinguishable from views on Trump. About half of U.S. adults have a "somewhat" or "very" unfavorable opinion of both Musk and Trump, according to the poll, while about 3 in 10 have a "somewhat" or "very" favorable view of both men. Only around 1 in 10 have a positive view of Trump and a negative view of Musk.

Trump picked Musk to oversee a push to shrink the federal government, cull the federal workforce and slash spending on agencies disfavored by the White House, prompting a flurry of legal action.

Rooting out waste is an important goal, said Julio Carmona, a 40-year-old health professional in Stratford, Connecticut.

But Carmona believes Musk, the world's richest person, lacks significant government experience and is not the right person for the job. □



## At least 9 people killed in southwestern Syria following countrywide Israeli strikes overnight

By MALEK KHATTAB and KA-REEM CHEHAYEB

Associated Press

**NAWA, Syria (AP)** — Israeli strikes in Syria reportedly killed at least nine people in the southwest of the country on Thursday, as Israel accused Turkey of trying to build a “protectorate” in Syria.

Syrian state news agency SANA said that those who died in the strikes were civilians, without giving details. Britain-based war monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that they were armed residents from the Daraa province.

Israel had also struck five cities in Syria late Wednesday, including more than a dozen strikes near a strategic air base in the city of Hama, where Turkey, a key ally of interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, reportedly has interests in having a military presence.

Syria's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the strikes had resulted in the “near-total destruction of the Hama military airport and the injury of dozens of civilians and military per-



A damaged vehicle sits amid the debris left by an Israeli strike on a military airbase near Hama, Syria, Thursday, April 3, 2025.

sonnel.”

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar accused Turkey of playing a “negative role” in Syria.

“They are doing their utmost to have Syria as a Turkish protectorate, it's clear that this is their intention,” he told a news conference in Paris on Thurs-

day. “We don't think that it was good when Syria was an Iranian proxy .... And we don't think that Syria should be” a Turkish protectorate.” Turkey's Foreign Ministry responded with a statement accusing Israel of “undermining efforts to establish stability in Syria.”

“Israel has become the

greatest threat to the security of our region with its attacks targeting the territorial integrity and national unity of the countries in the region,” it said.

Israel has seized parts of southwestern Syria and created a buffer zone there since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar Assad,

saying it's to secure Israel's safety from armed groups. But critics say the military operations have created tensions in Syria and aim to prevent any long-term stability and reconstruction for the war-torn country.

In the city of Nawa in western Daraa province, thousands took part in a procession through the streets to bury the dead.

Imad al Basri, an activist from the city, said that Israeli forces had advanced on Nawa for the first time on Thursday and arrived to the surrounding rural area when “people started to come out with light arms to the area of the incursion and there was an exchange of fire from both sides.”

Israeli soldiers withdrew and the Israeli military began to target the area with artillery shelling and airstrikes, he said, adding that ambulances were prevented from reaching the wounded and dead until the morning. He called on Syria's new rulers to take a stronger stance. □

Associated Press

## U.S. is negotiating a minerals deals with conflict-hit Congo, Trump official says

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE AND MARK BANCHEREAU

Associated Press

**KINSHASA, Congo (AP)** —

A Trump administration official said Thursday the United States is in talks with conflict-plagued Congo on developing its mineral resources under a deal that the Congolese president has said could help make his country safer.

U.S. President Donald Trump's senior advisor for Africa, Massad Boulos, did not provide details of the potential deal following talks with Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi in Kinshasa, but he said it could involve “multi-billion-dollar investments.”

“You have heard about a minerals agreement. We have reviewed” the Congo's proposal, Boulos said. “I am pleased to an-

nounce that the president and I have agreed on a path forward for its development.”

American companies would be “operating transparently” and would “stimulate local economies,” Boulos said.

Congo is the world's largest producer of cobalt, a mineral used to make lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles and smartphones. It also has substantial gold, diamond and copper reserves.

Tshisekedi said last month that he was open to a deal on developing critical minerals with the United States if the American involvement could help quell insurgencies and boost security in the African country.

“I think that the U.S. is able to use either pressure or sanctions to make sure that

armed groups ... can be kept at bay,” he said on U.S. TV broadcaster Fox.

The Trump administration also is negotiating with Ukraine over a minerals deal in that country, which originally was proposed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last fall in hopes of strengthening his country's hand in its conflict with Russia by tying U.S. interests to Ukraine's future. Eastern Congo has been in conflict for decades with more than 100 armed groups, most of which are vying for territory in the mineral-rich region near the border with Rwanda. The conflict has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, including 100,000 who fled homes this year.

The M23 is the most po-

tent armed group and is backed by Congo's neighbor Rwanda. In a major escalation since January, the M23 rebels have captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu and several towns in eastern Congo, prompting

fears of regional war.

On Thursday, M23 withdrew from Walikale, a key mining town in eastern Congo it captured last month, after weeks of fighting with Congolese forces and its allied Wazalendo militia. □



Massad Boulos visits The Great Commoner, Friday, Nov. 1, 2024, in Dearborn, Mich.

Associated Press



# Haiti announces new measures to fight gangs after thousands of protesters demand security

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— The leader of Haiti's transitional presidential council announced Thursday that it was taking measures to crack down on a surge in gang violence, acknowledging that the country has "become hell for everyone."

Fritz Alphonse Jean spoke a day after gunfire erupted in the Port-au-Prince capital as thousands of protesters demanding an end to gang violence clashed with police outside the offices of the council and the prime minister.

It was the biggest protest held since the council was installed a year ago.

"Haitian people, you've spoken, and we've heard you," Jean said. "We understand your misery. We know your pain and your suffering."

More than 4,200 people have been reported killed across Haiti from July to February, and another 1,356 were injured, according to the U.N.

Recent gang violence also left more than 60,000 people homeless in one month



A motorcyclist rides past a burning car during a protest against insecurity in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

Associated Press

alone, according to the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration.

"This national address comes at a decisive moment for the transitional government," said Diego Da Rin, an analyst with the International Crisis Group. "Protesters from various parts of the capital deliberately marched toward key government buildings to ex-

press their frustration." He noted that Jean's address marked the first anniversary of the political agreement that established the new transitional government's structure and objectives. Since then, cohesion between political parties involved in creating that government "has now largely collapsed," Da Rin said.

"The groups that originally

supported this government are now calling for a change in leadership," he noted.

The council has not addressed those concerns, which also have been voiced by the international community.

During his public address, Jean rattled off a list of neighborhoods that gangs have recently attacked.

"You lost your homes, you lost your businesses, you lost your jobs, they raped you, they raped your kids. The criminal gangs killed a lot of people," he said. "The fight against the darkness is not insignificant. But we are not insignificant ourselves... It's nothing compared with the battle we fought to get out of slavery."

Jean referenced how Haiti became the world's first free Black republic in a bid to rally support from Haitians, asking them to help law enforcement officials and eschew efforts by gangs to recruit people, especially children.

"Don't let people profit from your distress and drag you in bad directions," he said.

Jean said the council would take "important measures" to help quell the persistent violence, including setting aside a special budget and incorporating agents from an armed state environmental group known as BSAP.

"The council asks the prime minister and the police to take these measures without delay," Jean said.

"We are telling everyone in this government that we are at war." □

## Ex-Costa Rica president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias says U.S. revoked his visa

By JAVIER CORDOBA

Associated Press

SAN JOSÉ, Costa Rica (AP)

— Former Costa Rica President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias



Nobel Peace Prize laureate and two-time Costa Rican President Oscar Arias looks at the media during the opening ceremony of the XV World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates at the University in Barcelona, Spain, Nov. 13, 2015.

Associated Press

says the U.S. government's unexplained cancellation of his visa won't stop his public criticism.

Arias, 84, told the AP Wednesday that he received an email from the U.S. State Department on Tuesday, notifying him of the decision. The brief email said that the decision "is based on the fact that subsequent to visa issuance, information has come to light that you may be ineligible for your visa." It said that if Arias wanted to travel to the U.S. he would have to re-apply. The U.S. State Department did not explain the decision.

He spoke shortly after U.S.

President Donald Trump announced a wave of tariffs against dozens of its trading partners around the world, including a 10% duty on imports from Costa Rica.

It made no sense coming from the country that pushed free trade around the world and signed dozens of free-trade treaties, Arias said.

"History proves it. You can empirically analyze that those countries with more open economies and more free trade are the ones that have grown more and have been able to improve in little time," he said. Arias was the biggest promoter of the free

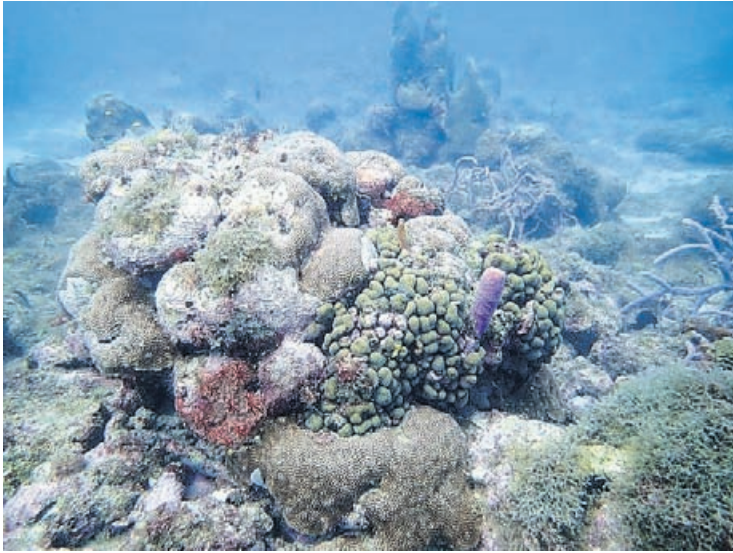
trade agreement that the U.S. signed with Central America.

Arias says he doesn't know why his visa was revoked, but acknowledged that Washington may not have liked his comments on the war in Ukraine, the U.S. commercial conflict with China or the situation in Gaza.

"Another of the big issues has been disarmament, spending less on weapons and soldiers to free up resources," he said. "To give them to education, healthcare and protecting the environment and so many other priorities there are in the world to benefit humankind." □



## Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!



**(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.**

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research

faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather,

like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐



## Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill

**(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.**

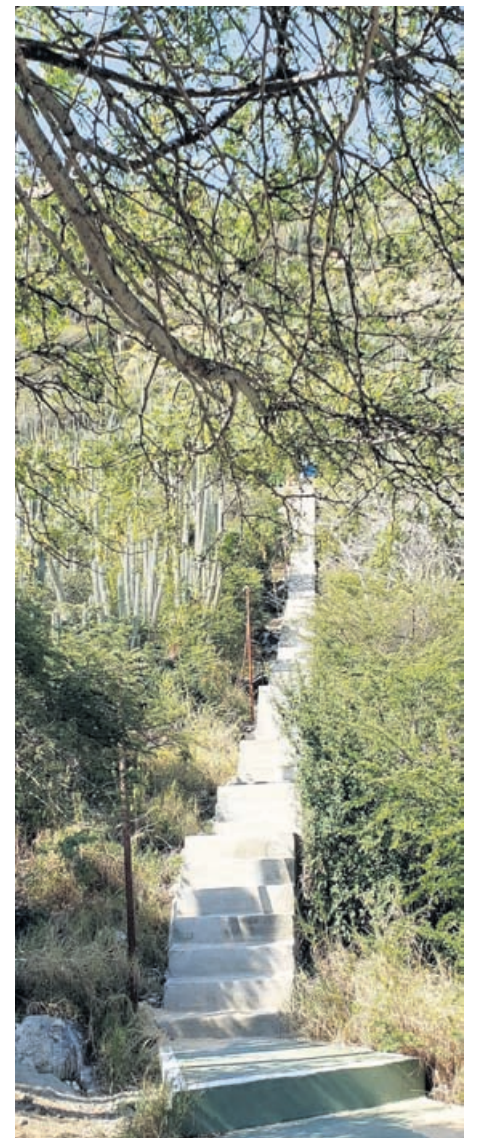
located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg



Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamana Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), lo-

cated in the Arikok National Park. The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. ☐





# Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba



**ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice (kite) surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses.**

Because of strong winds and

breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand

if you're wanting to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

## Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!



## Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

## Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

## Hadicurari

Known locally as Fisherman's Hut, here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest wind-surfing competition in the Caribbean!

## Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other water-sport activities. □



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## Snakes you may encounter on Aruba



(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

### Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it

could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

### Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.



Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □



### Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest



## Dining in? Try making a local favorite How to make “funchi hasa”



(Oranjestad)—A night in can be just as fun as a night out on the town, especially if you got the right snacks to munch on. One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is “funchi hasa” (fried polenta sticks). A super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here’s how to make it!

### Before we start, get to know the basics

So what is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups,

stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.

### Ingredients (measured by heart)

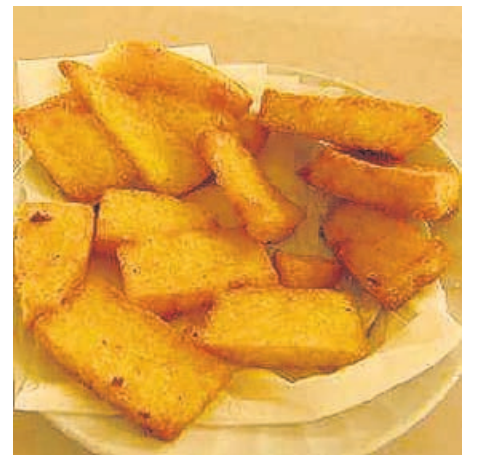
1. Polenta flour\*
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

### Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.

When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping



sauce.

Note: We recommend the FUNCHI FRESKU polenta flour brand that is sold in all supermarkets on the island. You can also use yellow corn flour from the brand PAN.□

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

## Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you’re ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can’t recognize. One of these may be the “Picuda”, a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here’s some information about the beloved Picuda.

Let’s talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? This is an informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Pa-

piamento, which the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, known as “Santa Rosa”, wants to share and also obtain information from the public.

### Picuda, Sphyræna barracuda, Greater Barracuda

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is Sphyræna barracuda. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called

“ambush predator” that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

### Description

The Picuda is a long fish, with a round body like a torpedo and sil-

ver in color with shiny black stripes. Below, that is, the belly, is whiter, while the top part is darker. Its snout is very pointed, and the lower jaw is longer than the upper one. Its peduncle, where the body meets the tail, is thick, while the tail also forms a crescent but in this case one more “full” than that of mullet or conefish. This reflects the hunting style of the Picuda. It needs to be able to accelerate quickly when the prey gets close.

### In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions.□

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.





## Aruba to me

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## Aruba's neighborhoods; the meaning behind their names

**Just like any other country, Aruba has unique and beautifully named neighborhoods that all form a part of its culture and development. Many of these names have a historical background and meaning that teaches us about the island and its rich culture every day.**

With this series, we want to take you on a journey of discovery, where you'll learn not only the beautiful names but the history behind it that gives it life and meaning.

### Anabui/Tierra Del Sol

This neighborhood can be seen on Van Raders map and Werbata as Anna Boei. Anna Boei is a name of which there isn't much information about its origin.

The best historians were able to deduce is that this name came to be because of a miscommunication between Van Spengler and the natives who were living on the island. In the Arawak/Taino language one can find the word Anaiboa, which consists of Ana meaning flower or the best and Iboa; the juice of a



cassava, which together would mean "the best juice of a cassava".

If one assumes that the actual word heard was Anaboio instead, consisting of Ana meaning the best and Boio (bohio); house, the iteration of Anabui would mean "the best house." This is the origin that has been more or less speculated and assumed for the word Anabui and it's meaning.

During the second world war and later, this area was used as a terrain for training of shooting by militia and later on Korps Mariniers (the marines of Aruba). By the end of the previous century a large part of Anabui was developed to have luxurious villas and a golf course, which lead to it getting the name Tierra Del Sol, Spanish for Land of the Sun. The name is not an official name, but the name of the devel-

opment project that took place. It is hoped that the original and 'old' name of Anabui is never lost and now it will be remembered by both locals and tourists.

### Angochi

This name can be seen on the Werbata map with little and cursive letters. It is the unofficial name for the area given by a tenant to the land that was rented to him.

The biggest probability that historians believe is that it comes from native descent, during the time in the 19th century where Mestizos still lived on Aruba. The name can't really be explain and according to books on its history seems to be more of a sign of corruption.

However, it seems to come from combining A(n), which is a generalizing prefix and Goeiza, which means 'the spirit of a living man'. Angochi remains more of a guess.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is; An. □





# CROSSWORD

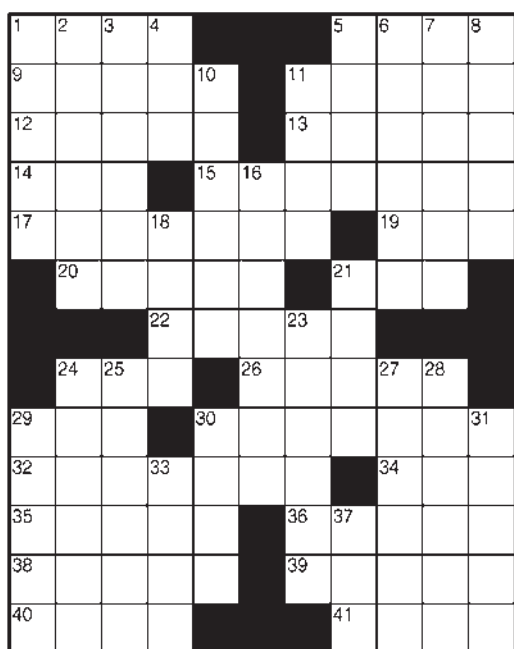
By THOMAS JOSEPH

## ACROSS

- 36 Wipe away  
1 Mass unit  
5 NYC cultural attraction  
9 Dance party attendee  
11 Lock setting  
12 "Skyfall" singer  
13 Houston player  
14 Polite address  
15 Fire  
17 Quarter-backs, at times  
19 Homer's bartending pal  
20 Inclines  
21 Kingsley or Affleck  
22 Canyon of comics  
24 Sit-up targets  
26 Comfy spots  
29 Hotel amenity  
30 City north of Newark  
32 Whole heaps  
34 Sea, to Simone  
35 Massage targets

## DOWN

- 1 Under-stand  
2 Tire type  
3 Reluctant  
4 Singer Tillis  
5 Church event  
6 Punctual  
7 Strand  
8 Without aid  
10 Advice to sinners  
11 One of the Mamas and the Papas  
16 Weapons store  
18 Pert talk  
21 Harry's wife  
23 Boat  
24 Cochise's people  
25 Big parties  
27 Tex-Mex treat  
28 Midday break  
29 Twitch or gnat  
30 Mosquito  
31 Wave's top  
33 Takes in  
37 Crater part



4-5

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

## 4-5 CRYPTOQUOTE

C BGIJ UWPPGIJV KJLWYPJ TGV

QJ CN CP W LVZ WHWCXPN

CXRCTTJVJXLJ, W LVZ TGV

LGQUWPPCGX. — JBCJ ECJPJB

**Cryptoquote:** WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, MY FRIEND, IS THE RESULT OF A LIFETIME OF CHOCOLATE. — KATHARINE HEPBURN

# Cruise ship Schedule: April 1 - 6 2025

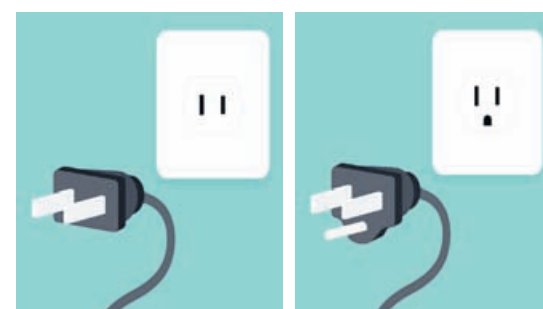
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	01	CELEBRITY REFLECTION CARNIVAL HORIZON NORWEGIAN VIVA LOGOS HOPE	08.00 09.00 11.00 ****	23.00 23.00 21.00 ****	B C I E	1 1 1 -
WED	02	ROTTERDAM LOGOS HOPE	08.00 ****	17.00 ****	C E	1 -
THU	03	AIDABELLA NORWEGIAN JEWEL LOGOS HOPE	08.00 10.30 ****	18.00 20.30 ****	B C E	1 1 -
FRI	04	NORWEGIAN PEARL LOGOS HOPE	10.00 ****	22.00 ****	C E	1 -
SAT	05	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS LOGOS HOPE	16.30 ****	**** ****	C E	1 -
SUN	06	RESILIENT LADY EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - dept. OCEANIA SIRENA LOGOS HOPE	08.00 **** 11.00 ****	23.59 23.00 21.00 ****	B C I E	1 - 1 -

# Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

## Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



## Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



## Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



## Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.





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ARUBA TODAY NEWS





# 'Freaky Tales' is a nostalgic, loving, exhausting and very gory ode to '80s Oakland

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**  
AP National Writer

Remember what it was like growing up in the East Bay in the '80s?

Ryan Fleck sure does, and vividly. The writer-director, together with partner Anna Boden, has produced a self-described "very weird" (no argument here) love letter to his former home in "Freaky Tales." But this ode to Oakland contains more than memories. It's not about the way things happened, Fleck says, but about the way he chooses to remember them.

Set in 1987, "Freaky Tales" is certainly creative. It is whimsically visual, think hand-drawn stick figures popping up, comic-book style graphics, or a sudden shift to cartoon mode and it has Pedro Pascal, never a bad thing.

It's also often heartfelt, even if it ends in a spasm of hatchet-wielding, samurai-sword-slicing, Tarantino-esque gore that, dare we say, doesn't feel like a love letter to anything except maybe Tarantino.

The real issue is, a lot of us don't remember grow-



This image released by Lionsgate shows Pedro Pascal in a scene from "Freaky Tales."

Associated Press

ing up in the East Bay because we didn't. Maybe we've never even been there. What's never quite fleshed out here is why this all should resonate with us or how these haphazard moments, albeit compelling, weave together in the cohesive way the filmmakers seem to promise.

In any case, Oakland in 1987 was "hella wild," we're told at the start: the peo-

ple, the culture, the music, and also a cosmic "bright green glow" an electricity in the air that may be a gift from aliens, or perhaps augurs the end of the world. The film then moves, in a style reminiscent of Robert Altman's "Short Cuts," through four separate yet connected tales happening on one night.

We begin with "Strength in Numbers: The Gilman

Strikes Back," set at 924 Gilman, home to the Berkeley punk rock scene. A sign on the club's door expresses its peaceful ethos: "No Racism, No Sexism, No Homophobia, No Drugs, No Alcohol, No Violence." But try telling that to the local band of skinheads who've been rampaging through the joint, terrorizing the crowd.

Usually, the punk kids don't

fight back. This time, they do. Young couple Tina (Ji-young Yoo) and Lucid (Jack Champion) are among those who arm themselves with terrifying weapons, including Tina's fearsome spiked bracelet, for a blood-spattered confrontation.

It's at another East Bay nightspot, Sweet Jimmie's, where aspiring female rap duo Danger Zone makes its mark in the second story, "Don't Fight the Feeling." Entice (singer Normani) and Barbie (Dominique Thorne) take their shot by agreeing to a rap battle with home-grown star rapper Too \$hort (played here by Symba), who launches the contest in the raunchiest of ways. Normani and Thorne are engaging, but the story is short on narrative heft.

Things get deeper in "Born to Mack," with Pascal as a once-violent debt collector trying to turn a corner. As his very pregnant wife sits outside in their car, their new life beckoning, Pascal's Clint goes into a video store where in a back room, his last collection job awaits or so he thinks. □

# Bruce Springsteen to release 7 albums of unreleased songs, 'Tracks II: The Lost Albums'

By **MARIA SHERMAN**  
AP Music Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Bruce Springsteen knows what Bruce Springsteen fans

want. And that's more Bruce Springsteen.

The Boss will release seven new studio albums, titled "Tracks II: The Lost Albums,"

on June 27. It will contain material written and re-recorded between 1983 and 2018.

The news arrived Thursday morning via Instagram. The 83-song collection is mostly previously unreleased tracks, 74 of them never-before-heard songs, in a box set that includes a 100-page hardcover book.

In a short video clip posted to the social media platform, Springsteen explains that during the COVID-19 pandemic, he began completing "everything I had in my vault," he says. "The Lost Albums are records that were full records, some of them even to the point of being mixed and not released."

Springsteen first teased the records on Wednes-

day morning. A short video posted to his Instagram account revealed that something called "The Lost Albums" was forthcoming, along with Thursday's date, April 3, 2025. The clip also featured text that read "What was lost has been found."

The caption urged his followers to head to [www.lostalbums.net](http://www.lostalbums.net). It led to a subscription webpage and featured the dates "1983-2018."

"Tracks II" follows his first "Tracks" volume. Released in 1998, it was a 4-CD, 66-song collection of unreleased material.

Springsteen released his last studio album, "Only the Strong Survive," in 2022. It was a collection of covers, the Boss taking on classics

from the Four Tops, Temptations, Supremes, Frankie Wilson, Jimmy Ruffin and others.

The late soul legend Sam Moore, a frequent Springsteen collaborator, sang on two of the cuts.

"I wanted to make an album where I just sang," Springsteen said in a statement at the time. "And what better music to work with than the great American songbook of the Sixties and Seventies?"

Next month, Springsteen and the E Street band will embark on a tour of Europe and the U.K., beginning May 17 at Co-op Live in Manchester, England, and concluding on July 3 in Milan, Italy, at the San Siro Stadium. □



Bruce Springsteen performs at Stand Up For Heroes in New York on Nov. 1, 2016.

Associated Press



# MASTERS '25: Rory McIlroy takes aim at a Grand Slam. Scottie Scheffler goes for another green jacket

By DOUG FERGUSON  
AP Golf Writer

**AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP)** — The Masters has its largest field in 10 years, and yet the first major championship of the year still feels like it's mainly about two players.

Expectations have followed Rory McIlroy down Magnolia Lane for the last decade, each trip to Augusta National giving him a shot at finally getting the last leg of the career Grand Slam and joining the most elite group in golf.

He has gone 0 for 10 at Augusta since he won the third leg. He hasn't been particularly close.

Scottie Scheffler is coming off a year so astounding that he drew comparisons with peak Tiger Woods. Now he tries to join Woods, Nick Faldo and Jack Nicklaus as the only back-to-back winners of the Masters. Another green jacket would be his third in four years, a dominance not seen at Augusta since Nicklaus some 60 years ago.

"Why does my game fit so well at Augusta National? It's a good question," Scheffler said. "The best way I could describe is when I'm in control of my golf ball, I have very good strategy for playing the golf course. But at the end of the day, you've got to hit the shots."

"And the last few years, I've been pulling off the shots I'm trying to hit."

The stage is the most familiar in golf, minus some trees lost when powerful and deadly Hurricane Helene roared through town last September. Those who have played Augusta in the last few months say it is in immaculate condition, with more open views of the course from the loss of trees. The club has not said how many, still sensitive to the destruction around it.

CBS, in its 70th year televising the Masters, plans to move forward. Sellers Shy, the CBS golf producer, said there would not be any before-and-after images to show the difference.



Scottie Scheffler speaks after winning the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club Sunday, April 14, 2024, in Augusta, Ga.

Associated Press

"That is not in the plans," Shy said. "We're covering the tournament the way it is presented to us and the way the club would like to present it."

What makes this year feel different is McIlroy has never looked more equipped to claim a Masters green jacket that once looked inevitable. For the first time in his career, he has started the season with two wins before getting to Augusta National, beating two strong fields at Pebble Beach and The Players Championship.

All that did was crank up the expectations, which McIlroy is embracing.

"I went through my fair share of losses, criticism, expectations," McIlroy said on the Golf Channel set before leaving the TPC Sawgrass.

Not winning a major in 11 years was one thing. Even more startling was he had only four good chances, and there was one stretch of 10 straight majors when he did not finish closer than eight shots of the winner.

"You have to be willing to get your heart broken, and I think I went through a few

years of my career where I wasn't willing to put myself out there," he said. "But I feel like I've figured it out."

He went to Augusta National before going to the Houston Open for his final start. He stopped by Augusta again on his way home from Houston. This feels like his best chance, also because the two players who outperformed him last year are coming off injuries.

One of them is Scheffler. Two moments late last year illustrate where McIlroy and Scheffler are heading into the 89th Masters, which starts April 10 with a 96-player field, still the smallest among the four majors.

McIlroy spent part of his offseason in a studio simulator, hitting balls into a blank screen to keep from looking at the flight of the ball and to concentrate on regaining the feel of his swing. In the eight tournaments he has played since then, he has three wins and three top-5 finishes.

Scheffler spent Christmas Day making ravioli.

Scheffler was coming off a nine-win season, including a 62 on the final day to win

the Olympic gold medal in Paris, when he used a wine glass to cut the ravioli. The glass punctured his right palm, requiring minor surgery. That led to him being away from competition for two months.

He is healed. He is pain-free.

He also is without a win going into the Masters for the first time since 2021.

"Did it set me back a little bit? Maybe some," Scheffler said. "But each day, my hand continues to improve. My body continues to get back to where it needs to be. And I think my swing is coming around."

In his final start before his title defense at Augusta National, Scheffler had rounds of 62 and 63 in the Houston Open and finished one shot behind.

Xander Schauffele last year at the Masters was regarded among the best to have never won a major. He returns trying to get the third leg of the Grand Slam at Augusta, after winning the PGA Championship and British Open. He was Scheffler's biggest threat until he quietly stepped away in January for two months be-

cause of a rib injury.

The return has been slow going, save for Schauffele extending his cut streak to 60 tournaments on the PGA Tour.

But is he Masters ready? He has yet to register a top 10 in three starts since his return.

"Competition golf is not the same as trying to play golf at home," Schauffele said. "High bar was set after last year, and coming off of that season I expected a lot of myself, and I still do now, even though it hasn't really looked like that."

Of course, the idea of this being a two-horse race even before the gates open is insulting to the likes of Jon Rahm, Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf League. They are back among the best for the first time since the British Open last July.

Rahm blew a back-nine lead at the Olympics, which would have been a gold feather in his cap with LIV getting so few opportunities on big stages. With only four such opportunities a year, Augusta National has become a real proving ground for them, particularly since any deal between the PGA Tour and the Saudi supporters behind LIV seems to be at a standstill.

They are among 12 players from LIV in the field, a group that includes Joaquin Niemann of Chile, who received a special exemption for the second straight year. He already has won twice this year, but his goals are higher.

"I know I'm going to win a major. I know it's going to happen," Niemann said after he won in Singapore. "Maybe not at the Masters, maybe yes. I have no idea. I just know it's going to happen. ... The way my game trending, I know it's going to happen eventually, so I'm pretty calm knowing that."

Believing and doing are different. No one knows that better than McIlroy. □

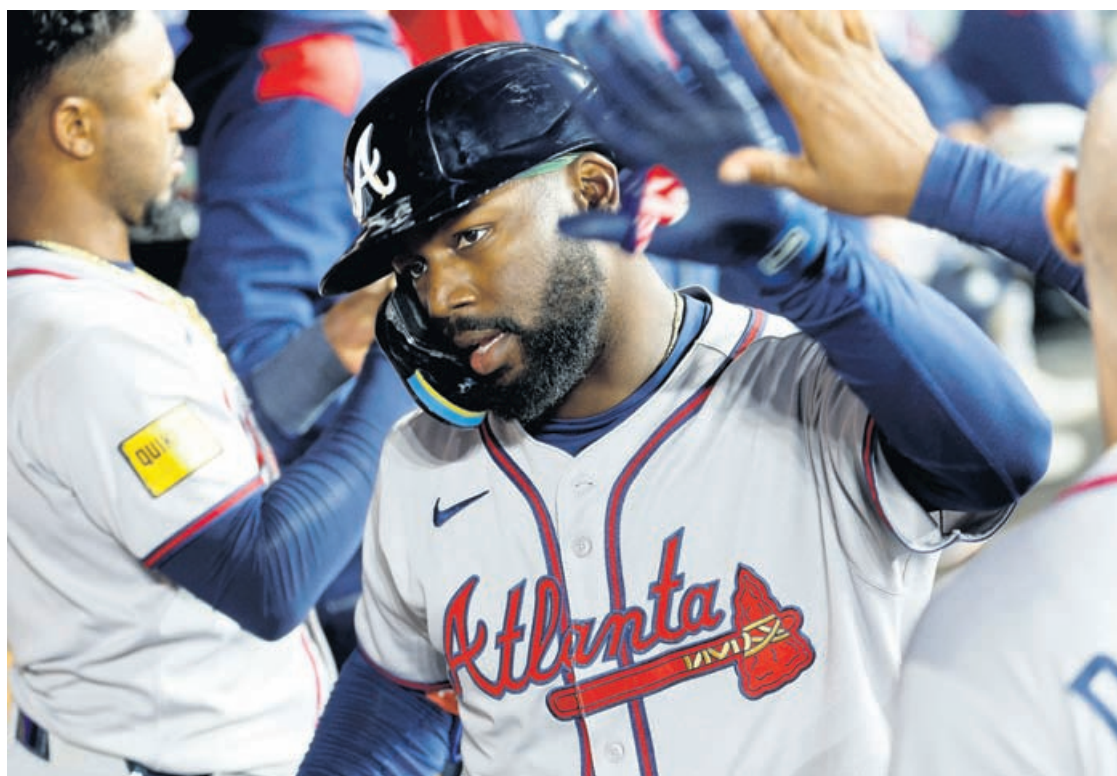


# Braves are desperate for recovery as they enter their home opener as the majors' only winless team

By **CHARLES ODUM**  
AP Sports Writer

**ATLANTA (AP)** — The Atlanta Braves' longest winless start since 2016 has left manager Brian Snitker desperate for a recovery he hopes begins with the team's home opener against Miami on Friday night.

Atlanta blew a 5-0 lead and lost 6-5 on Shohei Ohtani's ninth-inning homer on Wednesday night. The loss left the Braves 0-7 for their worst start since their 0-9 opening in 2016, when they finished last in the NL East. The Braves are the only team in the majors still looking for their first win, and the pain of the woeful start has been made worse by losing two players. Left fielder Jurickson Profar, the team's leadoff hitter and top off-season addition, was suspended for 80 games for performance-enhancing drug use. Right-hander Reynaldo López was placed on the 15-day injured list



Atlanta Braves' Michael Harris II is congratulated in the dugout after hitting a one-run home run against the Los Angeles Dodgers during the eighth inning of a baseball game Monday, March 31, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

because of an inflamed right shoulder. Snitker, who has enjoyed a run of seven consecutive postseasons, including the

2021 World Series championship, and six straight NL East titles, didn't try to hide the pain of the latest loss. "I wouldn't wish this on any-

body honestly, you know, in a competitive arena," Snitker told reporters. "And what we're going through is tough. Very tough."

The Braves were swept by San Diego in four games to open the season before three straight losses in Los Angeles.

A lack of hitting was the glaring weakness for most of the devastating road trip. After scoring only nine runs in their first six games combined, the Braves appeared to break out of their funk by taking an early 5-0 lead on Wednesday night. They failed to score after loading the bases with no outs in the sixth. Closer Raisel Iglesias gave up Ohtani's tiebreaking homer in the ninth.

"There's nothing you can do but just continue to fight your way out of it and show up," Snitker said, adding that the performance "was more of a real game than we've played, I think, in six days.

"It's a shame that we lost it. But you know what? That's up to us. I mean, we had it there. We couldn't finish the deal." □

## His tears dried, Dodgers rookie Roki Sasaki looks to bounce back on the road in front of Philly fans

By **BETH HARRIS**  
AP Sports Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Roki Sasaki had a rough go in his U.S. debut, getting pulled early in front of the home crowd.

His sad face and teary eyes in the Los Angeles Dodgers' dugout was shown on a Japanese TV feed, triggering reaction on social media and around baseball, not all of it flattering.

As Tom Hanks famously said, "There's no crying in baseball!" in his role as manager of the Rockford Peaches in the 1992 movie "A League of Their Own." "It's tough watching somebody cry out on the bench two starts into their career," retired six-time All-Star pitcher CC Sabathia told USA Today Sports.

"I would have much rather see him do that upstairs. There's no problem showing emotion but I want to see him do that in the lock-

er room. I wouldn't want people on the other team seeing him show that emotion if I was on the Dodgers."

Now, the rookie is going on the road to one of America's most passionate sports cities: Philadelphia.

The 23-year-old right-hander known for having a fastball that tops 100 mph is set to make his third start Satur-

day against the Phillies.

"I want him to continue to stay out there and stay vigilant," manager Dave Roberts said Wednesday. "He's not used to having some struggles and this is an opportunity for him to fight back, answer back." Sasaki threw a bullpen that Roberts said he heard went "great."

"I appreciate the fact that

he went back to work and he'll be ready to go," the manager said.

Sasaki doesn't have to look far for support. His locker is located next to fellow Japanese stars Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamoto. Like Ohtani did last spring, Sasaki revealed during camp that he had recently married.

Roberts wasn't sure if either of his countrymen had counseled Sasaki since he struggled with his control and got pulled in the second inning against Detroit last weekend. He gave up two runs and three singles, walked four and repeatedly fell behind early in counts.

Having observed Sasaki in the days since, Roberts said, "I think that he's handling it well."

Sasaki followed Ohtani and Yamamoto from Japan to Los Angeles, signing a minor league contract in January

that included a \$6.5 million signing bonus. He had a 29-15 record with a 2.10 ERA over four seasons with the Chiba Lotte Marines of Japan's Pacific League.

Sasaki certainly doesn't have to carry the Dodgers by himself. Besides Yamamoto and Ohtani, who's expected to return to the mound later this season, the rotation is stacked and their bullpen is deep.

"He's got the arm talent," Sabathia said. "I think he'll be fine."

Sasaki's transition to the majors has been bumpy so far. He made his debut last month against the Chicago Cubs in Tokyo, where he walked five in three innings while throwing just 25 strikes among 56 pitches. Then came his brief outing at home.

Waiting for him next are Philly sports fans known for their rowdy and sometimes unruly behavior. □



Los Angeles Dodgers' Roki Sasaki throws in the outfield during batting practice before a baseball game against the Atlanta Braves, Tuesday, April 1, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press